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The Incredible Magdeburg Water Bridge in Germany

The Magdeburg Water Bridge is a navigable aqueduct in Germany that connects the Elbe-Havel Canal to the Mittelland Canal, and allows ships to cross over the Elbe River. At 918 meters, it is the longest navigable aqueduct in the world.

The Elbe-Havel and Mittelland canals had previously met near Magdeburg but on opposite sides of the Elbe. Ships moving between the two had to make a 12-kilometer detour, descending from the Mittelland Canal through the Rothensee boat lift into the Elbe, then sailing downstream on the river, before entering the Elbe-Havel Canal through Niegripp lock. Low water levels in the Elbe often prevented fully laden canal barges from making this crossing, requiring time-consuming off-loading of cargo.

Construction of the water link was started as early as in the 1930s but due to the World War 2 and subsequent division of Germany the work remained suspended till 1997. The aqueduct was finally completed and opened to the public in 2003.

http://www.amusingplanet.com/2011/04/incredible-magdeburg-water-bridge-in.html

The Water Bridge is a channel-bridge over the River Elbe, located in the city of Magdeburg, near Berlin, that joins the former East and West Germany – what an engineering feat! Six years, 500 million euros, 918 meters long!
The third photo, above, was taken on the day of inauguration . . .
To those who appreciate engineering projects, here's a puzzle for you armchair engineers and physicists.
Question: Did that bridge have to be designed to withstand the additional weight of ship and barge traffic or just the weight of the water?
Answer: It only needs to be designed to withstand the weight of the water!
Why? A ship always displaces an amount of water that weighs the same as the ship, regardless of how heavily a ship may be laden.



… LIFE NEVER DISAPPOINTS BECAUSE TÖBEN IS ALWAYS HOPING FOR THE BEST BUT EXPECTING THE WORST WHILE LIVING IN THE BEST POSSIBLE OF WORLDS …

From: Fredrick Toben toben@toben.biz
Sent: Thursday, 20 October 2011 1:22 PM
Subject: Deception at its best - Adams remains silent on the hurt feelings protection racket under the RDA that imprisons Holocaust questioners - truth is no defence as is the case in ordinary defamation actions. There is no RIGHT to be WRONG!

Deception at its best - Adams remains silent on the hurt feelings protection racket under the RDA that imprisons Holocaust questioners - truth is no defence as is the case in ordinary defamation actions. David Marr's claim is also wrong: Under the RDA there is no RIGHT to be WRONG!

Phillip Adams never transcended his universal-atheistic-Marxist- radical Feminist-Global warming mindset and so for him the absolute bedrock of belief is made up of Adolf Hitler and the NAZIS. He hates anything that transcends his physical self – meaning anything of value such as truth, honour, justice, love, etc, and hates nationalism with a passion because, according to his belief system, it caused millions of Jews to be gassed – and for Adams there is nothing that equals things Jewish, which needs to be glorified as the pinnacle of absolute victimhood...

In the following article he is as deceptive as ever because he fails to mention that anyone prosecuted under the Racial Discrimination Act has no defence – because the material deemed to be offensive need only in all likelihood be regarded as offensive by a person – and that is anything. Remember the individuals in New York who when you look at them cry out indignantly: What are you looking at me for?

When we criminalise such alleged 'offensive' actions and attempt to protect hurt feelings on allegedly racial grounds, then we're in legal trouble where politics rules the justice system, and always to date that's determined by Jewish interests, which is certainly the case in most western countries that claim to be free and democratic.

Such falsely protective measures would always condone and never condemn lying as a life-style, even white lies destroy relationships because trust has disappeared, which is the glue of a functioning society. The maxim 'trust is good but control is better' suits the control freaks and the manipulators who care not about truth as the bedrock of our moral universe.

Remember the classic example: A person visits a friend dying in hospital. The friend asks: Is my husband/wife/partner being faithful to me? The reply is: Of course! The person who replies knows full well he/she is involved with the dying person's mate and so tells a lie in order to protect the dying person from further hurt. The morally correct thing to do would be to tell the truth and let the questioner grow up a little more just before closing their eyes. The questioner has responsibilities and cannot expect to be protected from prospective hurt by expecting another person to lie so that hurt feelings don't surface.

So, too, it is with those who claim to be hurt by words and are all out to criminalise the expression of opinions, nay, the actual act of thinking is truncated. Unfortunately our global society has adopted the Marxist pattern and we can only watch as it self-destructs, as did the Soviet Union ideology, which unfortunately found a quick home within the free and democratic western capitalist nations where crass predatory capitalism-usury has killed off anyone with a sound heartbeat and forced them into the so-called left-wing of the right-left ideological divide. This false consciousness dialectic of left-right is fearful of the far more sane and life-giving national versus international divide.

[Note how I had difficulties writing up this stuff in gender-neutral language!]

Fredrick Töben, Adelaide - 04170 88217

Give 'em enough rope

PHILLIP ADAMS The Australian October 15, 2011 12:00AM

TWENTY years on, Australia's 1975 Racial Discrimination Act was to be turbocharged with the threat of imprisonment for the worst cases of vilification.

I was one of the few on the Left to oppose this – and it cost me a lot of friends. Early in '94 I'd been invited to give the keynote address at an ethnic affairs conference in Hobart but by the time I approached the lectern my views were anathema and I was greeted with a chorus of boos. No longer a poster boy on matters multicultural, I was now the enemy.

I tried to explain my objections to a law that could send people to jail not for doing things but for saying things. No matter how vile the racism, how offensive the slur, it seemed to me a dangerous development. On the one hand I endorsed Amnesty International for opposing the imprisonment of non-violent dissidents – no matter how violent their language. On the other I was meant to endorse a law that could have Australians jailed over their opinions? More boos. A traditional free speech argument didn't play much better.

I doubt that many in my audience had had as many public brawls with bigots. (Two would result in complaints to the Press Council – who'd find in my favour). This column had oft berated Alan Jones and his mini-me Stan Zemanek over appalling views on Aboriginal Australians that they would

broadcast from 2UE. Andrew Bolt had yet to blossom but in the future I would frequently express horror at his columns on indigenous affairs, in particular his contempt for Stolen Generation stories. But as I tried to warn my audience (mostly representatives of ethnic organisations) against the risks, the hostility grew. They couldn't see that the protection they sought would be entirely counterproductive.

Listing the names of Australia's professional bigots, I cited the notorious anti-Semite Fredrick Töben who would later spend months in jail in Germany for dismissing the Holocaust as "a myth". Töben yearned to be charged here – even better to be found guilty of racism. Best of all, to be imprisoned! Martyrdom is marvellous publicity. No better way to increase readers, recruit followers and increase your speaker's fee. In this regard Töben learnt much from his British mentor, David Irving, who manipulated controversy and court cases to become a global hero of the neo-Nazi Right.

There was also a cluster of Australian shock jocks who saw a day in court (but perhaps not a term in the slammer) as manna from media heaven. But ignore the temptations of martyrdom. I tried to explain that my lifelong opposition to censorship had to extend to the most loathsome people and ideas. Freedom of speech doesn't work when it's qualified. And it links to the prohibition and interdiction of narcotics as much as to bigots. Just as stupid drugs laws serve to increase drug use, any attempt to prohibit and interdict ideas simply intensifies them. Case in point: decades of anti-religious propaganda hasn't turned the people of the former Soviet Union into atheists. Rather the opposite. Having been bottled up since 1917, religious fervour blew the cork at the fall of Communism and sent repressed faith frothing into the streets. I know. I was there when it happened.

Better to have appalling ideas out in the open so that they can be confronted and countered. A reader has sent me some of my quotes from 1994. Among them this: "You can't legislate tolerance into existence and you certainly can't legislate the end of bigotry."

I'm wholly sympathetic to the group who took Bolt to court. The findings against him were not an attack on free speech but a surgical criticism of mistakes and misrepresentations in his writings. But let's win on the strength of our arguments rather than through the skills of our lawyers.

http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/give-em-enough-rope/story-e6frg8h6-1226163863483

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Adams' own afflictions to the Talmudic death dialectic that requires him to have an enemy in order to function, instead of relying on his inner value system, is clearly evident in this 2006 article.

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Mel's affliction seems hereditary

The zeal of Hutton Gibson has clearly filtered down into his famous son's Hollywood career writes Phillip Adams *The Australian* August 08, 200612:00AM

MAD Max, the Road Warrior. Braveheart, the Woad Warrior. Mel Gibson, a bit of a worry. Mel brings a demented intensity to every role. In 1984's The Bounty, his Fletcher Christian was such that one could only sympathise with Captain Bligh. His Hamlet was madder than Ophelia, or Lear on the moors. In Conspiracy Theory, Mel's taxi driver was even loonier than Robert De Niro's in Taxi Driver. And in his double act with Danny Glover in the Lethal Weapon series, Gibson's as mad as a meat axe.

There's method in Mel's madness. In the Method acting tradition of mad Marlon Brando, he can clearly draw from dark depths of personal anger. The madness of Mel is a topic I've returned to over the years. This blazing talent is no blazing intellect but someone forever on the brink. And a week or so ago he jumped off.

Affected by the booze? Perhaps. But far more affected and afflicted by his father, Hutton Gibson, one of the ravingest ratbags Australia has produced, right up there with the recently deceased Eric Butler when it comes to rancid racism. As enthusiastic in his Holocaust denials as Frederick Toben of the notorious Adelaide Institute.

Butler, Toben and Gibson, an unholy trio with connections to the detestable David Irving. Little wonder Jews across the world were so concerned at the prospect of Gibson's film The Passion of the Christ. The charge that Jews killed Christ is the original sin of anti-Semitism, an accusation to justify 2000 years of pogroms. It gave the world Zionism, the death camps and Israel. And millions of copies of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a book as dangerous as Mein Kampf, are still out there. It's still a bestseller in every Muslim nation.

There were hints aplenty of Jewish deicide in Gibson's film. An exercise in religious pornography, it made Mel such a hero of US Christian fundamentalists that many urged him to be a candidate for the presidency. And Gibson's had plenty of experience on the stump. When visiting Australia, Mel would rage and rant against prime minister Paul Keating and campaign for members of the Gwydir group on the far Right of the National Party. More recently he joined the lists on the Terri Schiavo case, calling the legal decision to switch off her life-support a modern crucifixion.

A few years back a reader sent me bootleg tapes of Gibson Sr's sermons to his Australian flock. They were so disturbing that you could well understand the descent of his son into alcoholism. Dad is as compelling and charismatic as Osama bin Laden, and every bit as fanatical. In the recordings of his rants, Jews were not the principal target. That bullseye was pinned on the Polish Pope, along with other modern pretenders to the papal throne. Gibson's accusations of their betrayal of the Catholic faith - of their heresies - reached a crescendo with the Vatican damned as the home of the Antichrist. Utterly devoid of self-doubt or humour, Gibson Sr has all the son's dangerous intensity and more. To hear him is to fear him. His is the voice of the religious zealot, not a jot different from some Islamic extremist calling for jihad.

At the time of Passion's release, it seemed incredible that the Vatican should be supporting Gibson's marketing efforts. Bigots within the born again and Pentecostal movements had much to gain, whereas Catholicism - and American Jews - had much to fear.

With the immense profits generated by the film adding to Mel's wealth, he built Dad his own church near Hollywood where the two can practise a Catholic cultism that would scare Opus Dei. Suddenly, the Scientology of Tom Cruise and John Travolta seems comparatively benign.

"Don't go there," warned Mel when Dianne Sawyer questioned him on his father's attitude to the Final Solution, but he's now taken us all there with that drunken outburst. Right in the city that gave the world an assembly line of the imagination: the dream factory that created much of the American dream. A city and an industry created by Jews fleeing the pogroms of Russia and eastern Europe, to this day the other promised land of the Jewish diaspora.

The obscenities Mel spewed at the police station reek of self-hatred as much as anti-Semitism. And, hopefully, of some difficulties with Dad.

http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/mels-affliction-seems-hereditary/story-e6frg6rf-1111112147995

Bolt trial 'an exercise in smear'

Norrie Ross Herald Sun March 31, 2011 12:00AM

ANDREW Bolt told a court yesterday that a racial vilification trial is an attempt to smear him with unforgivable allegations of racism and homophobia and link him to the Holocaust.

The Herald Sun columnist gave evidence that he was being tried for exercising his right to free speech, and for raising topics that were "little discussed" because of intimidation.

Nine Aborigines are part of a Federal Court class action started by Pat Eatock against Bolt over articles and blogs on Aboriginal identity.

Herman Borenstein, SC, for Ms Eatock, asked Bolt why he described Sydney academic Mark McMillan as a "gay white man with a law degree" in discussing how he came to be awarded a Black Women's Action in Education scholarship.

Mr Borenstein suggested he was gratuitously playing to a homophobic audience.

"Why do you assume that calling someone gay is an insult?" Bolt replied. "There is no way I would use the word gay as an insult."

The godfather of one of his children was gay and anyone who read his columns would know he had a record of opposition to homophobia. "First you smear me with the Holocaust, then you smear me with being a homophobic bigot," he said. "It's an unforgivable travesty."

Justice Mordy Bromberg asked if a clearly distressed Bolt wanted a break.

The columnist said he was upset at the slur that came after his anti-racist views were linked by the complainants to Nazi race laws, eugenics, and a view that an Aboriginal was a black man on a hill with a spear.

In newspapers across the country he was greeted with headlines describing him as a neo-Nazi, Bolt said.

"This trial is being held to smear. If you woke up to these headlines you would be incandescent," he told Justice Bromberg.

The nine, who include Ms Eatock, former ATSIC member Geoff Clark, artist Bindi Cole and academic Larissa Behrendt, claim Bolt called them "professional Aborigines" who benefited from grants and awards to the detriment of more deserving Aborigines.

Mr Borenstein suggested Bolt's columns were gratuitous and deliberately hurtful and cited a passage where Bolt referred to "white Aborigines" who were "scuffling at the trough".

Bolt said the statement was satire and added "I probably watch too much Monty Python." Mr Borenstein suggested satire could hold people up to ridicule, to which Bolt replied: "I didn't know satire was a crime." Mr Borenstein said Bolt suggested Ms Eatock had started to call herself an Aborigine only when she was 19 and made no mention of her family background or cultural upbringing.

Bolt said that since he made his witness statement he had obtained further evidence to support his claim.

"How do we know you are not making it up to get yourself out of a jam?" Mr Borenstein asked. "I'm not in a jam," Bolt replied. The hearing is continuing.

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Bolt had right to be wrong but not rotten

David Marr, *October 20, 2011,* Opinion

Andrew Bolt's martyrdom is now complete: twice in the next fortnight his popular column in the *Herald Sun* will be accompanied by a nearly unreadable ''corrective notice'' outlining his sins against the Racial Discrimination Act. And that's it.

"No amendment of the law would have helped the hapless Bolt". *Photo: Vince Caligiuri*

Has he been fined for offending, insulting, humiliating and intimidating nine fair-skinned Aborigines? No. Does he have to pay them damages? No. Has he been warned off the delicate subject of whites identifying as blacks? Not at all.

In two columns published in 2009, Bolt named and shamed nine Aborigines he claimed were essentially white but identified as black to make a political point or advance their careers. Sadly for Bolt, all nine had grown up identifying as Aboriginal from childhood, a fact his paper's lawyers had to admit even before the court case began.

There is an issue here that really matters for white and black Australians but Bolt fundamentally botched his argument by naming the wrong names. Justice Mordecai Bromberg has now forbidden republication of the columns but republication is impossible anyway because they are so riddled with defamatory errors.

How else have Bolt and the *Herald Sun* suffered? Has the judge directed the paper strip the columns from its website? No. From its archives? No. Has he compelled the paper and its star columnist to apologise to the aggrieved Aborigines? Not even that. All Justice Bromberg has ordered to be done is publication of a 500-word notice in the paper and online setting out the nub of his judgment.

Its appearance three weeks ago sparked a controversy over freedom of speech in Australia, a controversy that has deeply divided journalists, lawyers and politicians. But all sides will probably see eye to eye on this: his Honour's prose lacks something of the verve, colour and slashing rhetoric of Bolt's efforts. His notice will be seen by many and read by few.

Really, Bolt and his editors should be breaking out the champagne. If the nine had sued in defamation, the paper might now be signing cheques for a few million dollars. The legal bills won't be cheap - the paper has been directed to pay most of the trial costs - but Bolt's ugly columns have not cost the *Herald Sun* much more than a fair dose of embarrassment.

That doesn't settle the free speech issues that hover over this case. The anti-vilification provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act used to attack Bolt are drafted far too broadly. They outlaw speech that is merely offensive or insulting. Vigorous public discussion in a free society is impossible without causing insult and offence.

This common problem with anti-vilification legislation in Australia is not solved by pointing to the strong free speech provisions of most of those laws, provisions that allow publication of even extreme material when conducted in good faith on matters of public interest. The law should not engage with offence and insult in the first place.
The *Herald Sun* and the shadow attorney-general, Senator George Brandis, are right to call for a reappraisal of the sections of the Racial Discrimination Act that brought Bolt undone. But short of abolishing these anti-vilification protections entirely, no amendment of the law would have helped the hapless Bolt.
He didn't just offend and insult. Justice Bromberg found the columnist's efforts were also likely to humiliate and intimidate the fair-skinned Aborigines attacked in those columns. Bolt ticked all the boxes in the Racial Discrimination Act. And the judge clearly signalled that in his opinion the columnist had also defamed the nine by accusing them of the cynical late-life adoption of Aboriginal identity.
The *Herald Sun* put out a statement after yesterday's decision: ''All Australians should have the right to express their opinions freely, even where their opinions are controversial or unpopular to some in the community.'' Absolutely correct. But surely not even in this awkward jam is Bolt's paper arguing that columnists are free to get it so comprehensively wrong when they mount ferocious attacks on people. There are limits. http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/bolt-had-right-to-bewrongbutnotrotten201110191m80a.html#ixzz1bGWyigPk

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Andrew Bolt says free speech lost as court finds he breached racial discrimination act

Bolt breached Racial Discrimination Act

Herald Sun **September 28, 2011 11:14AM**

http://www.news.com.au/national/andrew-bolt-breached-discrimination-act-court/story-e6frfkvr-1226148978809

A COURT has found News Limited columnist Andrew Bolt breached the Racial Discrimination Act

Justice Mordy Bromberg found Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times contravened the Racial Discrimination Act by publishing two articles on racial identity which contained "errors in fact, distortions of the truth and inflammatory and provocative language", reported the *Herald Sun*.
Speaking outside court, Bolt said it was "a terrible day for free speech in this country".
"It is particularly a restriction on the freedom of all Australians to discusss multiculturalism and how people identify themselves," Bolt said.
"I argued then and I argue now that we should not insist on the differences between us but focus instead on what unites us as human beings," Bolt said.
The columnist said he would read and consider the full judgment before commenting further.
Justice Bromberg said it was important to note his judgment did not forbid debate or articles on racial identity issues if done "reasonably and in good faith in the making or publishing of a fair comment".
"Nothing in the orders I make should suggest that it is unlawful for a publication to deal with racial identification, including by challenging the genuineness of the identification of a group of people," Justice Bromberg said.
Ms Eatock and a group of eight other Aboriginals took Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times to court claiming racial vilification over two articles in which he criticised fair-skinned Aborigines for what he argued was a choice they made, as people of mixed racial background, to emphasise their indigenous heritage over their white heritage.
In the articles, on April 15 and August 21, 2009, Bolt wrote that some fair-skinned Aboriginal people, whom he called "political Aborigines'', had received prominence or indigenous awards because they chose to identify with their Aboriginality.
The Eatock action claimed Bolt's articles - which appeared under the headlines "It's so hip to be black'' and "White fellas in the black'' - **had "offended, insulted, humiliated or intimidated'' them and were a breach of racial vilification laws.**
In court during hearings in April, Neil Young, QC, for Bolt, had argued that freedom of speech "trumped" other rights and was a cornerstone of democracy.
"Everything that's said, even if it's expressed colourfully, is rationally related to a thesis that's a matter of public interest,'' Mr Young had said.
He argued the legal test for racial vilification was how an informed person would interpret the views expressed in Bolt's articles.
But Ron Merkel, QC, for the complainants, said there was no attempt by Ms Eatock or other members of the group to shut down freedom of speech or debate about racial identity issues.
Mr Merkel said Bolt was free to express his views on the subject but should not have chosen to attack the nine individuals he named in his columns and blog.
In the sometimes heated court exchanges, Bolt took exception to Mr Merkel's comparison of the debate and Bolt's views to Nazi race laws, the Holocaust and eugenics.
Bolt argued those who chose to identify with only one part of their background over another were contributing to racism and came at the cost of less focus on the important issues of education, housing, health and poverty.
The parties were asked by Justice Bromberg to meet and discuss what orders the court should make.
The nine Aborigines who took legal action against Mr Bolt were former ATSIC member Geoff Clark, artist Bindi Cole, academic Larissa Behrendt, author Anita Heiss, health worker Leeanne Enoch, native title expert Graham Atkinson, academic Wayne Atkinson, lawyer Mark McMillan and activist Pat Eatock.
Mr Bolt and several of the plaintiffs were in court for today's decision.
http://www.news.com.au/national/andrew-bolt-breached-discriminationactcourt/storye6frfkvr1226148978809#ixzz1bHfw2OHa

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Money scammers get smarter

My Week Editor Callie Watson, *The Advertiser*, August 13, 201112:00AM

CONSUMERS are still falling for scams where they are promised rewards to help someone transfer money.
Criminals from Nigeria have been infamous for tempting people with get-rich-quick schemes over the years.
Last year, such schemes were the most commonly reported scams in South Australia, figures from Consumer and Business Services show. This was followed by people falling victim to emails that claimed their computer had a virus, fake overseas lottery wins and false billing - which targets small businesses and charges them for a bogus advertisement that never appeared anywhere.
During the 2010-11 financial year, 805 scam and scheme complaints were recorded. Consumer Affairs Minister Gail Gago said while this number was down on the 901 scams recorded

during 2009-10, scammers are more sophisticated than ever before.
"The methods used to target victims are more advanced," she said. "Social media has played a role in enabling scammers to disguise themselves as legitimate companies or individuals to persuade victims to hand over money or personal details."
Ms Gago said the continued popularity of online shopping, often from overseas, also heightened the risk of scamming.
Another commonly reported scheme was scams where consumers are offered employment in non-existent markets.
Scammers claim resumes will be considered upon payment of a fee to process the application, with the consumer usually not receiving a response and being left out of pocket.
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission deputy chair Peter Kell said online dating scams were another pitfall. "It's not actually one of the top scams in terms of people falling for it, but in terms of the amount of money that is lost, it's huge," he said. "You've got to be very careful with these pages."
People should report any suspected scam activity to the ACCC's website, www.scamwatch.gov.au, or call the information line 1300 302 502.

http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/money-scammers-get-smarter/story-e6frea6u-1226114024657

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Peter van Onselen:

Secure grants or you're likely to publish and perish

***The Australian*, September 14, 201112**

PUBLISH or perish. That's the adage often used to describe the challenges within academe. However, increasingly grants matter more than research publications.

If faced with a binary choice, most university administrators would prefer their academics secured large grants - with moderate publishing output - over and above minimal grants with high publishing output.
In other words, productivity is not the driving goal for modern academe in this country, at least not productive publishing.
The antidote, as is so often the case, is more funding so that grants aren't needed by universities to fill existing funding gaps.
Of course, in many cases grants do lead to publishing outcomes. But not necessarily of a greater quality or quantum, certainly not across disciplines. Filling out grant applications takes time and the funds are often used for a wide range of self-justifying endeavours. And given most grant applications fail, there are many academics who spend their time on a merry-go-round to nowhere, instead of improving their publishing outputs and contributing to the pool of knowledge in their field.
The reason universities want their scholars to win grants more than they want them to publish is very simple.
Grants provide high levels of funding, sometimes to the tune of millions of dollars.
They allow academics to hire teams of researchers, which enlarge the empires of heads of school, deans and vice-chancellors.
The hiring of people using grant money allows PhD students to be employed as researchers (which used to happen in the ordinary course of events before funding was squeezed). It also allows recent PhD graduates to remain within the university system working on large projects instead of being lost to public or private practice.
Importantly, universities take a cut to administer grants that are brought in by scholars, which helps already tight budgets stretch that little bit further.
It has become a de facto method for departments to boost their funding and staff.
While it isn't always the case, when academics are being hired those on the selection panel are often looking out for a track record of successful grant applications more than high rates of publishing (or track records as quality teachers).
Of course, universities want the triumvirate if they can get it. But if they are forced to choose between candidates with one strength out of the three, successful getting of grants usually wins out. None of this is the fault of the heads of school, the deans or even the VCs. It is the fault of government, which continues to demand our universities compete on the world stage, all the while expecting scholars within the system to waste time applying rather than researching.
There are real question marks over whether chasing grants should be the default setting across all disciplines.
As long as the application process doesn't become part of a scholar's output when filling out their workload forms, academics will be encouraged to keep on publishing lest they perish. Surely that is a lesser of evils approach?
Peter van Onselen is a Winthrop professor at the University of Western Australia.

http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/secure-grants-or-youre-likely-to-publish-and-perish/story-e6frgcjx-1226136118991

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Loneliness of the PhD thesis writer

Peter van Onselen, Contributing editor, *The Australian*, June 22, 201112

STUDYING for a doctorate can be a lonely experience. When I started my supervisor compared it to a medieval form of torture where guards used to strap dead bodies to the backs of prisoners, leaving them in the dungeons until the dead body had rotted through the unfortunate inmate's back.

His message: complete it as quickly as you can, with no distractions.
Ignoring that advice I took close to maximum time to complete my PhD (well, that's how it felt): working, partaking in further study and publishing widely before formally graduating. I have the scars on my back to prove it, but it helped me get my start in academe.
The role of the PhD as a rite of passage to becoming an academic is but one of many contradictions in the profession.
How does a minimum of three years spent in virtual solitary confinement writing 100,000 words as a dissertation prepare people to teach classrooms full of undergraduates in their teens? Once upon a time PhD graduates took their time to complete while holding down tutor positions. Not anymore: occasional session teaching is as good as it gets.
How does the PhD - original research that is often complex, bordering on the unintelligible - prepare wannabe lecturers to simplify and refine ideas for an audience new to scholarly endeavours? No formal teaching qualification is required to stand before a classroom in academe.
The isolation of studying for a PhD is matched by university research which is often also done by the individual. Good researchers move up the ranks quickly, putting them in line for promotion to chairs of disciplines, heads of school, deans and VCs.

Being a quality researcher doesn't necessarily provide the right training to become an excellent administrator. And shouldn't universities find ways to provide incentives to keep quality researchers researching, rather than moving into higher-salaried administrative postings?

All professions have their contradictions. In law, for example, you fight your way to partner by being a good lawyer, yet once you get there the role of partner is more PR (getting clients and keeping them) than black letter law. But in the academy the contradictions are vast.

My first supervisor's advice (I took so long to complete that I went through two of them) that I complete quickly represents a particularly important contradiction in the profession.

University funding models encourage pushing students through quickly; yet that isn't necessarily in the students' best interests - certainly not if they are looking to become an academic. There are far more PhD graduates floating around than entry level academic positions. When universities receive applications from eager candidates for new jobs, one of the first things those on the selection panel do is check for publishing output. After all, it's publish or perish.

But if you just spent three years diligently working your way towards PhD completion, you wouldn't have had the time or the inclination to revise chapters as you go, sending them off to journals for peer review.

Yet that is what gives candidates for new positions the edge. And without taking time off during studying for your PhD you wouldn't have built into your CV real world experience within the discipline you are working in - an increasingly important string to one's bow in the modern university construct.

It's time to think harder about how we blood people for a career in the academy.

Peter van Onselen is a Winthrop professor at the University of Western Australia.

http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/opinion/loneliness-of-the-phd-dissertation-writer/story-e6frgcko-1226079461466

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Doctorate just the first step

John Ross *The Australian* September 10, 201112

MOST people consider a PhD a major achievement in itself. For Cara Young, third-year doctoral student in biomedical engineering at the University of NSW, it's the first step.

"Before you get here, you think it's what you're aiming for. Once you get here it really is just the start," she says.

Some start. Young is working on a new therapy for type-1 diabetes. It involves injecting the patient with tiny clusters of islet cells – the key insulin-producing cells of the pancreas – to simulate a transplant.

The biggest challenge, as with any transplant, is rejection. That's where Young's research comes in. She's experimenting with semi-porous membranes capable of shielding the clusters from the body's immune system, but allowing the transmission of oxygen, nutrients and waste.

Ideally these membranes – made of inert polymer hydrogels similar to those used to manufacture soft contact lenses – would be embedded with proteins and other molecules capable of increasing the islet cells' longevity.

Young admits it's a long shot. Success is years off, and by no means guaranteed. But if it works it could replace multiple daily insulin injections and the attendant problems of wayward glucose levels, the need for constant vigilance and the dread of being caught short.

Or it could eliminate the need for a pancreas transplant – for those who can get one – and a lifetime on immuno-suppressive drugs whose side-effects can outweigh the benefits of the transplant.

And the applications could go well beyond diabetes. "This is being looked at by other research groups for liver disease, central nervous diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, even genetically modifying cells to secrete anti-cancer factors," she says.

"It's a powerful technique. The race is on in this field. You could use whatever cells you wanted."

Creating the polymer membrane – a process known as cell encapsulation – seems more akin to engineering than medicine. But for Young, the two go hand in hand.

Her undergraduate training was a biomedical engineering degree at the University of Melbourne.

For the engineering stream, students could choose mechanical, chemical, electrical or computer science. Young chose mechanical. "We had labs with the boys who wanted to work on racing cars. We had biomed subjects with the people who wanted to do medicine. Then we had subjects to bring those areas together.

"Instead of a motor, it would be your arm. You'd look at the forces in your muscles and that sort of thing."

UNSW's Graduate School of Biomedical Engineering was a logical next step. Active research projects include neural stimulation devices such as the bionic eye and blood pressure regulation applications, as well as Young's cell encapsulation project. These sorts of problems demand a "multi-disciplinary mindset".

Young says her mother, an occupational therapist, needs to consult the nurse, doctor and physio before developing a therapy. "In my project, I don't need to source all of those people because I have the basics. I can do the mechanical testing, I can do the cell work, I can make the polymer.

"In pretty much any area you look at, a multi-disciplinary approach works best. Broad-scale issues like climate change need people able to look at all the different aspects."

But the skills have to be deep as well as broad, she says. Hence the PhD.

Doctoral study can be largely about marking your space and eventually earning your place in the top-end research teams with the firepower to solve the big problems. These collaborations reach across national borders and across institutional boundaries into corporate research departments.

"You need to be able to show that you're able to play at that level," Young says.

This can come down to the credibility of your team and your supervisor.

"Obviously your supervisor might need to recommend you personally, but it's also about who you know – and you become known through your research achievements."

This usually entails direct progression up the academic hierarchy. "You move through your PhD, start publishing, get recognised in your specific area, move on to a postdoc and a fellowship and up the ranks of a university or another sort of research organisation."

But when she finishes her PhD next year, Young plans a side-trip down a long alley – a four-year medical degree.

This would qualify her as a doctor, in both senses, while still in her early 30s. But it's an unconventional step from a higher qualification back to undergraduate study. Nevertheless, it could be a straighter line than conventional academic progression, she says.

Ultimately she hopes to use her medical expertise to inform research in an area not unlike her current field. And that isn't the typical experience, she says.

"With a PhD, some people end up working in their area or something closely related. But a lot just use it as a tool for learning how to be a researcher, and end up doing something completely different."

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Make me a mother - whatever the price

Robyn Riley, *Sunday Herald Sun,* July 29, 201112

HOW far are women prepared to go to become mothers? We know many are willing to risk their lives.

And also push the boundaries of medical science. But the question remains whether society is prepared to sit back and allow these boundaries to be continually stretched.

When I read last month about a Swedish biology teacher named Sara who wanted her mother's womb so she could have a baby, I thought it was a step too far. Her mother, Eva Ottosson, 56, wanted to help Sara, 25, - who was born without a womb - to become a mother.

I believe there is nothing more instinctive than a mother wanting to help her child, but I did wonder if a mother's love was clouding judgment and common sense.

When an international team announced it was preparing to attempt a womb transplant, it was understandable ethicists questioned the project.

And like the once controversial procedure of in-vitro fertilisation, it might be Australian ethicists and politicians will have to be among the first to address this because Australia again looks like it will be at the forefront of this radical transplant program.

One of the architects is Queensland-based Ash Hanafy, who believes the womb transplant has the potential to help thousands of women become pregnant.

A Melbourne woman has already asked to be considered for the program. She asked not to be named, so we will call her Sue. Sue has a young son, but complications at his birth meant the 30-year-old had to have an emergency hysterectomy. "We've looked into adoption and other options, such as surrogacy," she said. "This might be the way to go."

Sue plans to ask her mother to be the donor because she has no sisters.

I asked about the risks and Sue said that would be her decision.

"I want more than anything to have another child," she said.

But should it be Sue's decision alone? Ethicists argue it may not be acceptable for patients to risk major surgery when their lives are not technically in danger and that's a valid point.

Swedish Sara doesn't need her mother's donated womb to save her life - the transplant is life-enriching rather than life-saving - but it underscores the medical community's difficulty to say no to women so desperate to give birth.

And it is not about cash. The procedure may attract thousands - but not money-making millions - of women worldwide.

But what should not be overlooked is that specialists warn this is one of the most complicated surgeries in modern medicine; more difficult than transplanting a kidney or heart because of the increased risk of bleeding. There are risks to donor and recipient and the recipient will need to take immuno-suppressant drugs that can increase the risk of infections, high blood pressure and diabetes.

This type of transplant has been attempted once before - 11 years ago in Saudi Arabia - but the organ survived only three months.

The Swedish-based team believes it is better prepared for success after 10 years of research. Consultant and clinical dean of obstetrics and gynaecology at Queensland's Griffith University, Dr Hanafy is also a member of the international research team preparing to do the transplant.

He recently published a peer-reviewed paper on uterine (womb) transplantation in the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, coming to the conclusion the process can work. He believes the transplant is a stepping stone to the next stage - wombs grown from stem cells in laboratories. That is also being pioneered in Australia.

Dr Hanafy argues the human transplant procedure has moved on from being life-saving to a new area that is about improving the quality of life - in the past decade we have seen hand, face and larynx transplants.

At the heart of this debate is a woman who wants only to be a mother and a mother who wants only to help complete her daughter's dreams.

Sara has Mayer Rokitanksy Kuster Hauser syndrome - which affects about one in 5000 people. It means she was born without reproductive organs. Her mother told Britian's Daily Mail newspaper that Sara needed her womb more than she did.

"If I'm the best donor for her, well, go on. I've had two daughters so it has served me well."

Sara said: "It's just an organ like any other organ."

Most of us understand what drives women to go to such lengths to have a baby - but is the gift of a womb going too far? When does risk outweigh result and when is it time for doctors to say no?

I put that to Dr Hanafy. He is a softly spoken man, a father who had that day delivered three babies.

"This (surgery) carries a huge risk to improve the quality of life," he said. "(But) for some women, having a baby is that important and it becomes about improving their quality of life."

Dr Hanafy has been involved in the Swedish-based womb transplant project from the start. He told me it started at the suggestion of a young Australian woman desperate to preserve her fertility. Dr Hanafy was one of the doctors caring for 26-year-old Angela in an Adelaide hospital. The other was Mats Brannstrom.

When Angela needed a radical hysterectomy to treat cervical cancer, she asked about a womb transplant. Dr Hanafy was then a young resident at the hospital; Dr Brannstrom was in Australia for a year to complete his studies before returning to Sweden where he is professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Gothenburg University. "We looked at each other and thought, why not?" Dr Hanafy said. "Angela told us she had a mother and sister who would be willing to be donors."

Sadly, Angela lost her fight with cancer, but her legacy could be the reality of human womb transplants. Dr Hanafy will help operate on Sara and her mother in Sweden next year.

It will be complicated microsurgery requiring the team to not only rejoin blood vessels and fix the womb in a normal position, but to also join ligaments to stop it moving.

And then it will be a 12-month wait to make sure it is not rejected by Sara before a pregnancy - through IVF - can even be attempted.

And when a pregnancy is achieved and completed, the womb will be removed. That might seem like a lot of effort to some, but to those desperate for a baby, they are, well, baby steps.

http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/opinion/loneliness-of-the-phd-dissertation-writer/story-e6frgcko-1226079461466

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Greg Craven:

Standards agency armed to the teeth

***The Australian*, September 14, 201112:00AM**

AS any good naturalist can tell you, one of the most important tasks in assessing a new creature is classifying it. After all, no one wants to confuse a tiger snake with a large striped earthworm, or a Collingwood supporter with a relatively harmless funnel web.

So it is with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. From the faintly nervy perspective of universities, what exactly is the commonwealth's latest bureaucratic accessory? A helpful acquaintance? A worryingly frank friend? A deeply confrontational parking inspector?

From the time TEQSA was a mere glint in the governmental eye, Canberra has been crystal clear. It always has presented TEQSA as a risk-based regulator, sometimes in overtones that were almost erotically righteous.

Well, yes and no. TEQSA certainly is designed to assure higher education quality through assessment of institutional and sectoral risk. But that does not mean that it is some generalised risk-sheriff, riding ill-defined boundaries and meting out its own quirky brand of risk-referenced justice.

Under an extremely carefully drafted piece of legislation courtesy of the Gillard government and a supportive opposition, TEQSA is much more than a risk regulator. It is, as the lawyers would say, a creature of statute.

What this means is that whether as a risk assessor, a regulator or a public service morning tea gathering, TEQSA is exhaustively defined by law. It has every power given to it by its statute and not one iota more. The rhetoric of risk regulation neither adds to nor subtracts from that remit.

This is a vital point. There can be a tendency, among TEQSA's critics and its boosters, to argue that now the political dust of its creation has settled, the authority is as free to chart its own course as a wandering dolphin.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Among the rich and varied fauna of the Australian legislative jungle, TEQSA not only has substantial teeth but is positively loaded with corresponding tracking devices.

The reasons for this are twofold. First, TEQSA has serious power over serious things: universities. Universities are constitutional bulwarks of free thought and free speech, balancing the powers and pretensions of government. They are not to be controlled lightly.

Second, the early stages in the development of TEQSA suggested a departmental psychology rather more firmly bedded in notions of regulation than it was in checks and balances. As the consultation process proceeded, and criticism mounted, the government recognised the challenge and reacted appropriately.

The result has been a piece of legislation remarkable for the level of co-operation it represents between government and the sector, and for the range of safeguards it provides. The two are as intimately linked as New Idea's latest celebrity couple.

The central problem in the early TEQSA drafts was that they proposed a regulator without a directing philosophy.

This is as problematic as a terrier without a leash. Fortunately, the TEQSA legislation as enacted now has a philosophy as clear, strident and explicit as Dick Smith on a good day.

It is neatly collected in Part 2 of the act under the heading Basic Principles for Regulation, with which TEQSA must comply. Which part of the words basic and must do you not understand?

These basic principles are TEQSA's own TEQSA. They do not so much limit TEQSA as define it. Move outside these principles and TEQSA ceases to be a public authority and becomes a huddle of public servants chancing their arms.

Like all great principles, these come in threes, and each is a biggie. The principle of regulatory necessity is the TEQSA brand name for light touch regulation. Put simply, TEQSA is to interfere in the sector as little as it can, while still achieving its vital legislative objects.

Interesting that this risk-based regulator's first principle is not one of risk but of governance. Or, to put it another way, the primary risk identified by TEQSA's own legislation is over-intrusive regulation.

Next is reflecting risk. Note that the formulation is not simply risk, which would imply that all institutions are negatively risky, and you are simply calibrating levels of terror. A principle of reflecting risk necessarily implies there can be no risk and therefore no required response.

Finally, the principle of proportional regulation requires, Mikado-like, that the regulatory step matches the occasion. When the parking fines are wrong at Monash, TEQSA starts with a polite letter, not deregistration.

Of course, principles are all very well, but are these enforceable? Only in the sense that an aircraft carrier packs wallop. TEQSA's basic principles, like certain toothpastes, come with multiple rings of protection.

First, they apply to everything in the TEQSA package. Embedded not only in their own clauses but in the act's very objects, these principles apply from the formulation of the standards down to the exercise of the minutest power.

Second, they inoculate TEQSA's psychology. Good officers act within power and there is nothing to suggest TEQSA's fledgling crew are not good officers.

Third, the principles will be the first call of the finicky Administrative Appeals Tribunal when it comes to review TEQSA's decisions. But, as with steak knives, there's more. As Julia Gillard can tell you, nothing concentrates the public mind like a good judicial walloping.

If the basic principles are breached, by a standard, a decision or an inquiry, the Federal Court will be happy to talk about it.

Finally, there is that little thing called parliament. Cross the line of basic principle, and standards can be disallowed like a suspect All Blacks' try.

None of this is to say that TEQSA is a regulator without teeth. In fact a myopic reading of its legislation can leave you with the impression that you have just had a close encounter with a great white shark.

But the point is that like all useful legislative predators, TEQSA is programmed to bite only certain creatures in certain circumstances. Dodgy operators will be mauled. Responsible institutions will be gummed. That is the Law of TEQSA.

Greg Craven is vice-chancellor of the Australian Catholic University and chairman of the Universities Australia standing group on TEQSA.

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